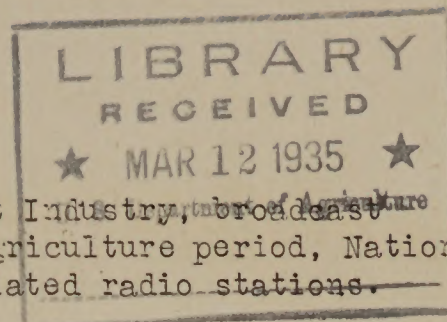


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LESPEDEZA IN 1935



A radio talk by L. W. Kephart, Bureau of Plant Industry, broadcast Wednesday, February 27, 1935, in the Department of Agriculture period, National Farm and Home Hour, by NBC and a network of 50 associated radio stations.

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Dean Cox and Mr. Edler have discussed the seed situation with this audience calling attention to the fact that Korean lespedeza is one of the few forage plants whose seed supply this year is equal to that of last year. They believe, in fact, that the supply of seed of Korean lespedeza is big enough to sow an even larger acreage than that of 1934.

This is fortunate, for lespedeza promises to be helpful in two ways in the sections where it is adapted. First, it may be used as a low-cost crop to hold and improve soil, especially on acres shifted under adjustment contracts. Second, it may be used as an emergency hay crop.

Let me outline the limits of adaptability of the plant. For common lespedeza the northern limit follows an irregular line from southern Iowa through central Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, to southern Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Common lespedeza is also established in eastern Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. Korean lespedeza can maintain itself somewhat further north than common, that is to say to about the latitude of Chicago and New York City. It is the seed of Korean that is most plentiful this year.

The adjustment contracts for corn and wheat and tobacco and cotton encourage constructive use of the land by planting the acres removed from cash crop production to soil-saving and soil-improving crops. The two crops of that sort whose seed supplies are most plentiful this spring are soybeans and lespedeza.

Soybeans could be sown and later plowed under for soil improvement, but they would be more expensive than lespedeza. In the regions where lespedeza is adapted, it is the cheapest available plant for use in holding the land and improving it. The seeding rate for lespedeza used as a soil protector is from 6 to 10 pounds per acre.

For hay production Korean lespedeza has proved a good crop well up into northern Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Missouri, and its use in that region where drought ruined forage crops last year is recommended where the moisture and soil conditions are ordinarily good enough to make a crop of corn. From southern Kentucky southward, the common lespedeza and its varieties, known as Tennessee 76 and Kobe, will also give good results.

In thinking of what to plant for an emergency hay crop, many farmers would naturally first think of Sudan grass. But there is not enough Sudan grass seed available to supply one fourth of the men who would want it. Soybeans also are good as an emergency hay crop. Soybeans stand drought better than does lespedeza. But, as said before, soybeans are not as cheap as lespedeza.

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Considering the seed situation carefully, and the available supplies of seed for emergency hay crops, we recommend lespedeza as an emergency hay and pasture crop in the regions where lespedeza has proved to be adapted. We urge that farmers who plan to plant it act promptly to get their seed. Seeding begins in the southernmost areas early in March; in the northern part of the lespedeza area, seeding takes place in April.

If you want lespedeza for hay this year, you must seed at a heavier rate than you would for soil-holding. 25 pounds to the acre is not too much for hay production this year. And for greatest hay production sow Korean on good, moist land.

Fertility is as important to lespedeza as to any plant; while for hay production moisture is even more important. The plant resists drought, it is true, but it doesn't grow much under dry conditions. Given moisture, it makes a hay crop. Experience has shown that for each four inches it stands above the sickle bar of the mower, lespedeza will yield a ton of hay to the acre.

Thus if you are sowing lespedeza primarily to protect and improve the soil this year, you can get those results with a seeding of only six to ten pounds to the acre. Such a crop, if allowed to go to seed, will produce a volunteer hay crop next year. But if you want to harvest a hay crop this fall, sow at least 25 pounds to the acre, and sow that lespedeza on good land.

Of course, the exact rate of seeding may differ somewhat on different farms and in different communities. But in general the rules are 25 pounds to the acre on good land for hay, and 6 to 10 pounds to the acre as an economy measure, where the plan this year is for something to hold and improve the soil. The reduced rate of seeding for soil holding will not only save you money, but help conserve the supply of lespedeza seed, which will be sown this year on many more farms than ever before.

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